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How the Common School Has Failed Hispanic Children—Witnessing the Severe Regression of Language English Proficient Learners During a Pandemic: Teaching During COVID-19

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How the Common School Has Failed Hispanic Children—Witnessing the Severe Regression of Language English Proficient Learners During a Pandemic: Teaching During COVID-19

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The Beginnings of Unexpected Change

I will never forget Friday, March 13, 2020. My students and I were set for spring break the following week and had heard in passing that a case of COVID had been reported in Texas, location unknown. I remember seeing CNN10 in February with my bilingual students, and we had talked about how Wuhan, China, had been hit by this unknown *novel corona virus*, and we had discussed how unfortunate the situation was for the people who had to stay in their homes and weren't allowed to go outside. It was important for my students to become aware of what was occurring globally, but my students and I never made a connection of how impactful this virus would be in our own lives until that fateful day. Just as quickly as Friday had begun, it ended with an early dismissal. I never saw my class again, that was the end of the year for my students and I ... and we didn't even know it. Had I known then that this would have been the last time I would have seen my students' beautiful faces unmasked, I would have hugged each one of them and given them a proper goodbye.

How the Common School Has Failed Hispanic Children

The United States has had a ferocious historical need to acquire land and expand its resources (including by enslavement) throughout its formation, but has made shameful efforts in educating the people

whose land it has acquired and the people it has willfully and unwillfully accepted into the United States when taking over their lands. Educating all citizens truly did not occur until the late 1900s. The focus changed to education when there was a moment of realization that we were underperforming globally (Spring, 2018, pp. 478–479). The US began to evolve when the notion occurred that all citizens must be educated and have the same opportunities to enrich their own lives through the acquisition of education, no matter a person's race or gender, in order to compete with the rest of the world (Huber, 2002, p. 12).

The struggle to create equal education for all who live in this nation has been especially trying for Hispanic children who have been put into many different English language acquisition programs (e.g., early exit, late exit, one-way dual language, two-way dual language) for countless years, often times changing mid-year without sufficient resources or trainings to implement the new program successfully. The inability to educate Hispanic youth with the proper resources may maintain economic stagnation because they do not acquire the skills needed to advance to higher paying jobs, or positions with benefits and security. Even with the start of the “War on Poverty” programs that were initiated in the 1960s, the issues that Hispanic children were subjected to in US school systems were not erased or eradicated. Spring (2018) highlights that “Universal education has been perhaps the greatest single force contributing both to social mobility and to general economic growth” (p. 420). The more years of education a student has, the further away they get from being poor. Educators must realize that “effective education for children at the bottom of the economic ladder requires special methods and greater expenses” (Spring, 2018, p.

420), particularly when combatting generational poverty.

At a campus composed of 67% Hispanic students, when the pandemic began, so did a major push to acquire iPads and MiFi's (internet) for students in our school district. In the meantime, as students waited from March 2020 to October 2020, our bilingual parents and their children were left without any way to acquire learning tools. The more affluent families and monolingual students in our school weren't as severely impacted by this sudden shift in learning as they already had their own personal devices and internet that they were accustomed to using in a daily basis pre-pandemic. The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (2014) Sustainable Development Goal 4

includes enabling all young people to complete a basic education cycle including quality pre-primary education; acquiring knowledge, skills and competencies for work, entrepreneurship and life; experiencing good quality teaching and inclusive classroom practices; and accessing educational opportunities based on equity, flexibility and adaptability. (p. 5)

This global goal needs to be met in my own school as Hispanic children are experiencing less opportunities in becoming educated due to accessible technology and knowledge of usage, a handicap that can be prevented and rectified.

I can also refer to Tharp's ethnogenetic analysis model (see Figure 1) in which "Tharp (1994) argued that current issues are not only occurring in the present moment by means of cause and effect, following a unidirectional timeline, or in random order; instead, the present moment is bidirectional in which past events are simultaneously

potent in the present moment" (Huber et al., 2018). I have been here before, the inability to aid my Hispanic population is a generational issue my school system shamefully knows too well.

Figure 1

Tharp's Ethnogenetic Timeline: Hispanic Children's Continuous Educational Repression

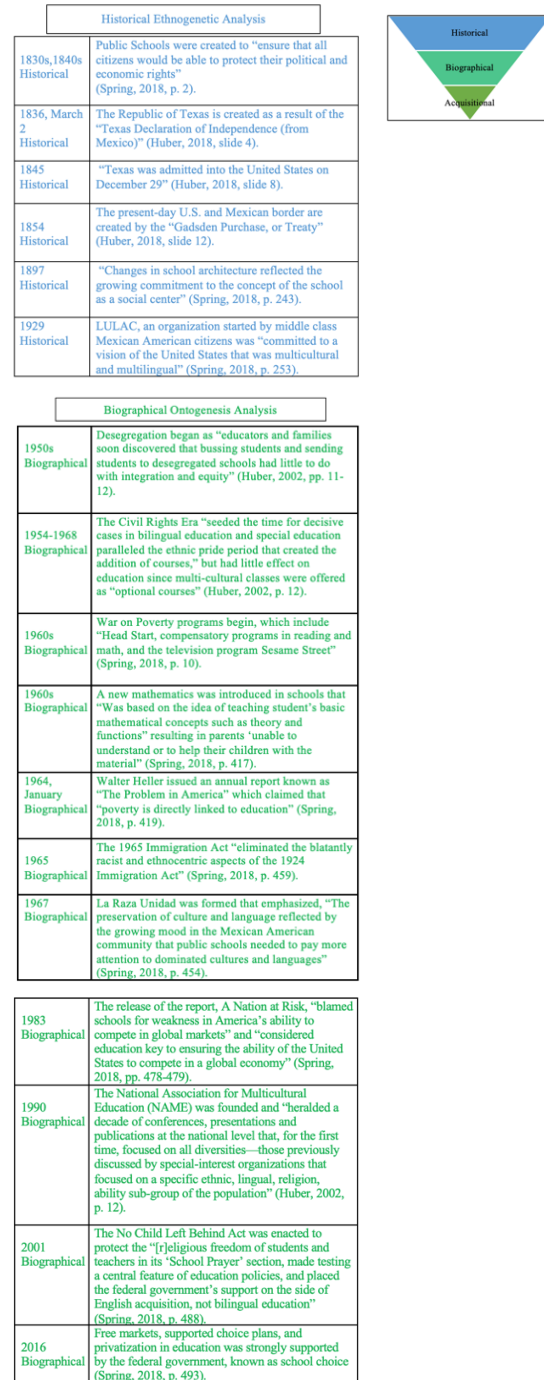


Figure 1 continued

Acquisitional Microgenesis Analysis	
March 2020 Acquisitional	Students are issued iPads, but at limited quantities with no experience on how to use them or Wi-Fi devices given to those without internet (A. DeLuna, personal communication, March 23, 2020).
October 2020 Acquisitional	Students are not allowed to get library books due to COVID and are not able to take their school issued iPad home due to security concerns creating a nonexistent method of enrichment reading (A. DeLuna, personal communication, October 13, 2020).
2020-2021 Acquisitional	During the pandemic, one Texas ISD "is moving forward with a dual-language two-way program at the kindergarten and 1st grade level in three of its elementary schools in the 2020-21 school year" (ISD, 2021).

Texas Teaching During COVID-19

After the spring break of 2020, I was asked to begin creating asynchronous lessons for my students. This was not an easy feat, but not because of the actual lesson planning and implementing. No, this was due to actually having lack of student engagement and participation. I couldn't be harsh on my students because I realized they were facing a sudden change in learning methods and they also had unexpected and unusual outside influences impacting them (see Figure 2).

Figure 2

Photo of Pandemic Shopping, An Empty Grocery Shelf (Held, 2020)



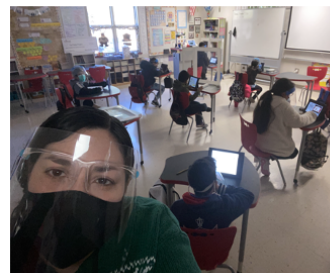
I connected to the definition of a global citizen educator who must "develop attitudes of care and empathy for others and the environment and respect for diversity" (UNESCO, 2015, p. 16). This was very apparent, and I quickly realized that not only were my students facing food shortages in their own homes since they were not eating at school, but they were also not equipped

with technology to perform the online assignments asked of them. There was no way to be successful in this new learning transition, especially when hunger and lack of internet kept them from obtaining knowledge, hence one of the reasons behind the gap my students are now facing. The gap this pandemic has caused my dual language students and other Limited English Proficient (LEP) students in my campus is very apparent. I realized early on that very few of my students actually owned any type of electronic device. For many of them, their parents never placed an emphasis on technological skills such as did those of the monolingual student populace, but rather taught them blue collar skills, such as construction, mechanics, and electrical traits. So, when we suddenly went virtual, my LEP students were immediately at a disadvantage. In the same way that "[m]any Mexican families were reluctant to send their children to school because of the loss of the children's contribution to the family income in the 1890s" (Spring, 2018, p. 192), my students' parents were focusing on teaching them manual labor skills and not technology.

My proudest moment during this pandemic was educating my students' parents on how to troubleshoot, upload applications, and use multiple applications when my school began using Google Classroom. (see Figure 3).

Figure 3

Getting Ready for Blended Learning, December 17, 2020



In doing so, I know that they realized that their children could also aspire to technological jobs in the future. Tharp's ethnogenetic analysis model provides teachers a way to consider "the historical processes of culture of origin but consider them as they are filtered by events and forces in individual life history, learning experiences, and current conditions" (Huber, 2018, slide 2)—in other words, to meet children where they are in the learning experience. In 1899, John Dewey wrote that "children were to develop social imagination by learning to relate ideas, inventions, and institutions to the social conditions that gave birth to them" (Spring, 2018, p. 286). As I read this statement, I could justify its relevance in today's classroom setting as I have recognized that my in-person students have benefitted from learning experiences and activities much more so than my virtual students, who may or may not actually show themselves on video via Zoom or answer my requests. After multiple parent and student meetings for active virtual participation, I still could not get every virtual student to comply, and so the engagement level of my in-person students has taken center stage, and they have shown more growth in learning than my virtual students because they have had more opportunities to share ideas, opinions, and inquiries on a subject, and to relate to new skills being taught by forming connections with their own background knowledge (see Figure 4).

Figure 4

Engagement Activity, January 5, 2021



My virtual students have not been so fortunate, and their lack of progress is evident. In 1897, discussion began that "changes in school architecture reflected the growing commitment to the concept of the school as a social center" (Spring, 2018, p. 243). When looking at my classroom today, socializing is the furthest thought in my mind. COVID has changed the way my students communicate; it is less of an authentic experience, and more distant as they type out their responses or speak in short sentences due to mask and face shield constraints (see Figure 5).

Figure 5

My Classroom With Students Under Masks and Face Shields, January 26, 2021



I have no small groups, or individual instruction anymore due to distance requirements, nor can students borrow or touch another item that isn't theirs. Communal supply sharing is unthinkable! Yet here I am, teaching in a socially created setting to distant in-person and virtual learners. This form of learning has changed the way I can freely teach concepts and skills because now my safety and those of my students is at the forefront of my mind every day. The school as a social center, a safe place for parents and students alike, is no more, and the psychological effects of this change can be felt by all (see Figure 6).

Figure 6

My School's Empty and Unused Library Since October 13, 2020, Photo Taken on March 1, 2021



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Appendix A

Figure 1

Tharp's Ethnogenetic Timeline: Hispanic Children's Continuous Educational Repression

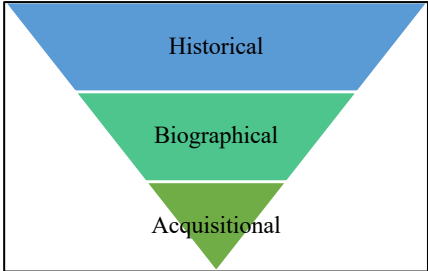
Historical Ethnogenetic Analysis		
1830s, 1840s Historical	Public Schools were created to “ensure that all citizens would be able to protect their political and economic rights” (Spring, 2018, p. 2).	
1836, March 2 Historical	The Republic of Texas is created as a result of the “Texas Declaration of Independence (from Mexico)” (Huber, 2018, slide 4).	
1845 Historical	“Texas was admitted into the United States on December 29” (Huber, 2018, slide 8).	
1854 Historical	The present-day U.S. and Mexican border are created by the “Gadsden Purchase, or Treaty” (Huber, 2018, slide 12).	
1897 Historical	“Changes in school architecture reflected the growing commitment to the concept of the school as a social center” (Spring, 2018, p. 243).	
1929 Historical	LULAC, an organization started by middle class Mexican American citizens was “committed to a vision of the United States that was multicultural and multilingual” (Spring, 2018, p. 253).	

Figure 1 continued

Biographical Ontogenesis Analysis	
1950s Biographical	Desegregation began as “educators and families soon discovered that bussing students and sending students to desegregated schools had little to do with integration and equity” (Huber, 2002, pp. 11-12).
1954-1968 Biographical	The Civil Rights Era “seeded the time for decisive cases in bilingual education and special education paralleled the ethnic pride period that created the addition of courses,” but had little effect on education since multi-cultural classes were offered as “optional courses” (Huber, 2002, p. 12).
1960s Biographical	War on Poverty programs begin, which include “Head Start, compensatory programs in reading and math, and the television program Sesame Street” (Spring, 2018, p. 10).
1960s Biographical	A new mathematics was introduced in schools that “Was based on the idea of teaching student’s basic mathematical concepts such as theory and functions” resulting in parents ‘unable to understand or to help their children with the material’ (Spring, 2018, p. 417).
1964, January Biographical	Walter Heller issued an annual report known as “The Problem in America” which claimed that “poverty is directly linked to education” (Spring, 2018, p. 419).
1965 Biographical	The 1965 Immigration Act “eliminated the blatantly racist and ethnocentric aspects of the 1924 Immigration Act” (Spring, 2018, p. 459).
1967 Biographical	La Raza Unidad was formed that emphasized, “The preservation of culture and language reflected by the growing mood in the Mexican American community that public schools needed to pay more attention to dominated cultures and languages” (Spring, 2018, p. 454).

Figure 1 continued

1983 Biographical	The release of the report, <i>A Nation at Risk</i> , “blamed schools for weakness in America’s ability to compete in global markets” and “considered education key to ensuring the ability of the United States to compete in a global economy” (Spring, 2018, pp. 478-479).
1990 Biographical	The National Association for Multicultural Education (NAME) was founded and “heralded a decade of conferences, presentations and publications at the national level that, for the first time, focused on all diversities—those previously discussed by special-interest organizations that focused on a specific ethnic, lingual, religion, ability sub-group of the population” (Huber, 2002, p. 12).
2001 Biographical	The No Child Left Behind Act was enacted to protect the “[r]eligious freedom of students and teachers in its ‘School Prayer’ section, made testing a central feature of education policies, and placed the federal government’s support on the side of English acquisition, not bilingual education” (Spring, 2018, p. 488).
2016 Biographical	Free markets, supported choice plans, and privatization in education was strongly supported by the federal government, known as school choice (Spring, 2018, p. 493).

Figure 1 continued

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2020-2021 Acquisitional	During the pandemic, one Texas ISD “is moving forward with a dual-language two-way program at the kindergarten and 1st grade level in three of its elementary schools in the 2020-21 school year” (ISD, 2021).

Appendix B

Figure 2

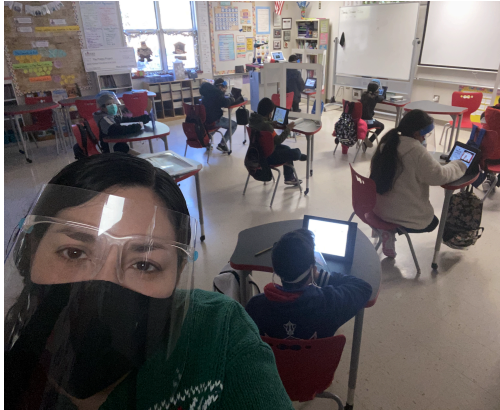
Photo of Pandemic Shopping, An Empty Grocery Shelf (Held, 2020)



Appendix C

Figure 3

*Getting Ready for Blended Learning,
December 17, 2020*



Appendix D

Figure 4

Engagement Activity, January 5, 2021



Appendix E

Figure 5

My Classroom With Students Under Masks and Face Shields, January 26, 2021



Appendix F

Figure 6

*My School's Empty and Unused Library Since
October 13, 2020, Photo Taken on March 1, 2021*

